

News Release

Wellness Center at U of M Crookston Receives \$1 million Gift Naming Entrance/Lobby in Memory of Mitch Lien Nielsen

*By Itollefs on Monday, September 22, 2014*The University of Minnesota Crookston announced a \$1 million gift to name the entrance/lobby of the new campus wellness facility, which will begin construction next year. The gift, from Les and June Nielsen, will name the area in memory of their son, Mitch Lien Nielsen. The announcement was made on Monday, September 22, 2014, at a press conference followed by a ceremonial groundbreaking for the wellness center.

Les Nielsen graduated in 1958 from the Northwest School of Agriculture, a residential high school located on what is now the University of Minnesota Crookston. He went on to earn a degree in business from the University of Minnesota. In 1968, the Niensens along with long time friend, Gene Ellingson, started Herc-U-Lift Incorporated, a forklift truck and material handling equipment distributorship. Les served as the company's president for thirty-six years, and June worked alongside her husband in the business. Les remains as the company's chief executive officer.

"The Nielsen family has always placed a high priority on education," says Fred Wood, chancellor of the U of M Crookston. "They are incredibly grateful for what the University of Minnesota has done for them, and in turn, have established scholarships to benefit students at the University of Minnesota Crookston.

"This most recent gift demonstrates once again the Nielsen's appreciation for the University and their wish to support the Crookston campus," Wood continues. "They are making a difference in the lives of our students today and tomorrow."

Background

Les Nielsen was raised near Euclid, Minn., in a home where reading and studying were encouraged. The Northwest School of Agriculture, established as part of the land grant mission of the University of Minnesota, offered rural Minnesota students a residential, agricultural high school designed to meet the needs of the region.

Along with Les, three of his brothers attended the Northwest School of Agriculture, and three of them went on to the University of Minnesota: Andrew graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School, and Richard earned a degree in business and worked for the Internal Revenue Service spending years in management. Les also earned a degree in business from the U of M. The Niensens have established two scholarships in memory of their son, Mitch Lien Nielsen, who was taken from them in 1989 in a motorcycle accident.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus--as well as 13 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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